

II. The Jubilee in Biblical Perspective  
“The Year of Jubilee and the Great Commission”

Isaiah 61:1-2, Luke 4:14-21

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January 31, 2010 – Morning Sermon

We will look at two passages we looked at in our last study in our series on The Year of Jubilee and The Great Commission. This is our second study in this series. So we will start in Isaiah 61, then we'll look at Luke 4 and finally in Matthew 28 in this study. Tonight we are studying the book of Daniel. We'll talk about how we live in a pagan world and make an impact for Jesus Christ. The book of Daniel shows us Christ and how Christ enables us to live for Him and point to Him even in a hostile environment, a pagan environment. All conversions are amazing but the second most amazing conversion recorded in the Bible is found in Daniel. It's the conversion of a pagan king in Daniel 4.

Secondly, every year as we approach the mission's conference I try to recommend something for you to read. With great encouragement and enthusiasm I recommend the autobiography that was edited by his brother on John Paton who was the missionary to the New Hebrides in the South Pacific. It is something like 215 miles of 80 islands and this book is hard to put down when you see how God used this man. As you approach the mission's conference I would recommend you turn the television off and get your family together and start reading this biography and try to time your reading to get through it by the time the conference starts. It is very exciting reading and will be great enjoyment and preparation for the conference as well as informing.

Let's look at Isaiah 61. It's the Word of God, it's the Truth. Isaiah 61:1:2 says, *I The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor (in the Hebrew it would be the same word as 'grace.')*, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.

The grass withers, the flower fades. This is God's Word. It abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

This is a short little series on our Year of Jubilee. This is Briarwood's 50<sup>th</sup> year and God has been blessing Briarwood so we want to celebrate, contemplate and anticipate. We want to celebrate what God has done. We want to contemplate why and how God has done it and anticipate how we serve God moving into the next 50 years. In the last study we went back to Leviticus 25 which is the definitive text on the Year of Jubilee and is the extension of the Biblical command of the Sabbath. In other words, God has placed a Sabbath gift to us. In fact, that is what Jesus said. He said, "I did not make man for the Sabbath. I made the Sabbath for the man (Mark 2:27)." God created the Sabbath in creation as a method of how we're to live. We are to have six days labor and one day rest. We are to rest from our normal labors to embrace the holy vocation of eternity which is to worship as a family with the family of God. We have the one day in seven, the weekly Sabbath, of course fulfilled in Jesus and now we have the Lord's Day the Christian Sabbath, the first day of the week that commemorates the resurrection of the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

Then for His Old Covenant people He instituted a Sabbath year. Not only was there one day in seven, but there was to be one year in seven in which you gave God's land the rest it was to have. You rested from your normal labors and you brought the produce that God would bring from the land and its rest. You wouldn't work the land, dress the vines or anything but you would just go bring from it what God would sovereignly provide for you. Then God in Leviticus 25 says "Now I'm going to give you a Sabbath year for the Sabbath years." So we not only have one day in seven, one year in seven but we now have a year for every seven of the seven years of the Sabbath and that was called the Year of Jubilee. On the 49<sup>th</sup> year you would rest the land and on the 50<sup>th</sup> year you would rest the land and then even more things happened on the year of jubilee.

Whatever was sold or bought in that 50 years all returned back to their owners. Anyone in indentured servitude was set free. All debts were paid. Everything was restarted and reset in justice, mercy and grace. No land barrens, not chattel slavery would be allowed for all of that would be done away with because of God's jubilee year, the year of grace. So it was an extension of the Sabbath where God would extend His grace and mercy not only one day in seven, not only one year in seven, but now another year for all of those years He would teach us to rely upon Him because now you not only had to let the land rest the 49<sup>th</sup> year and 50<sup>th</sup> year. But you would plant the 51<sup>st</sup> year so you would end up three years utterly dependent upon God's grace and mercy to sustain you. In that year the Kinsmen redeemer would pay the redemption price, the ransom, so that everyone would be set free. All debts would be paid and everything would be done.

Now this principle of redemption is given, so now not only is the year of jubilee the extension of God's Sabbath blessing but the jubilee becomes one more Sabbath prophesy of a Messiah. The weekly Sabbath proclaims a Messiah who will give us rest from our sins and bring us to an eternal rest to be with Him. The yearly Sabbath would affirm that and the year of Jubilee would even expound that. That became so clear that the jubilee year pointed to the redeeming work of God not only to physically give us rest, physically set things in order and physically renew and refresh us but spiritually to deliver us from the bondage sin, to deliver us from that which captivates us in our rebellion against God that God's year of grace had been promised. So the prophets picked up on that.

You find this Year of Jubilee pointing to Jesus in passages like Psalm 146 and in Jeremiah but one of the clearest and the one that is used in the New Testament is in Isaiah 61. In the passage in Isaiah He takes the Year of Jubilee and uses it to point to the coming of the One who would bring us to the jubilee of redemption and eternity, the Lord of the Jubilee, the Lord of the Sabbath and that is Jesus Christ Himself, the Messiah. This is the Messiah passage. Five things are said about the Messiah in the first two verses of Isaiah 61.

Number one is 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me'. The Messiah would be affirmed by the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon Him. Number two is 'the Lord has anointed Me'. He would be anointed and affirmed. This Messiah would be sent by God, called by God and publically affirmed has having been sent by God. Number three is this Messiah would preach the Gospel, the Good News not just to the physically poor, broken hearted and imprisoned but now to those who are spiritually poor, the ones impoverished spiritually, those broken hearted and held captive because of sin, those who needed to be comforted and delivered from their sin. He will come 'to preach Good News to the poor,

bind up the broken hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives and open the prison to those who are bound'. The fourth thing the Messiah will do is 'to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor'. The Year of Jubilee would arrive, the fullness of the Year of Jubilee. It is the Year of Jubilee that the Old Covenant jubilees were pointing to. It is this New Covenant blessing of the living God having redeemed and set free His people. He will proclaim the year of redemption and deliverance has arrived. Then the fifth thing He would do is He 'will proclaim the day of vengeance of our God'. So He would initiate a span of time of proclaiming deliverance. Then He would do and declare the Day of Judgment and vengeance and that's what He would do.

Now this text in Isaiah is the passage that Jesus uses when He begins His ministry. Now I would like to look at the passage in Luke 4. Here Jesus has been baptized, been in the wilderness to be tempted by Satan to keep Him from going to the cross and now He has arrived back to the Sea of Galilee in His hometown area. Luke 4:14, 15 says, **14** *And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. 15* *And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.* Here He is in ministry and everybody in the surrounding areas are talking about Him and they are saying that this Messiah has now come.

Now Luke 4:16-21 says, **16** *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. 17* *And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written (Isaiah 61:1, 2), 18* *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19* *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* **20** *And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21* *And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

Now what has happened here? Why did Jesus stop at the comma? Why didn't He go on to the end of the sentence? One might say, what are you talking about? Remember I said that Isaiah 61 said five things. He would be affirmed. He would be anointed by Spirit of God. He would proclaim the Good News and He would declare the year of favor, the year of jubilee. The year of grace and deliverance has arrived. Fifthly He would proclaim the day of vengeance. In other words, the Messiah was coming for two objectives. Objective number one is to proclaim the year of God's favor. Objective number two is to proclaim the day of God's vengeance.

Now where did Jesus quit reading? He stopped at the year of God's favor. He stopped at the comma. He didn't go to the end. Why? I guess He just got tired of reading. It was time to end the service. Maybe He just made a mistake. I am absolutely amazed at the intricacies of God's inerrant Word. As this is recorded and Luke gives us where Jesus stopped which was not at the period but the comma it was because the Messiah had two objectives and those were to announce redemption and accomplish it for His people, the year of grace. Then the Messiah will announce and be the Judge of all in the day of God's wrath. The reason He stopped at the comma is because we haven't gotten to the period yet. That's what He will come back to do. His first advent, "I have

not come to announce the day of vengeance (to judge), but I have come to announce the day of grace and mercy.”

There will be a day of vengeance. There is a wrath to flee. There is a Day of Judgment in which only two verdicts are given. One will be to enter in to this glorious jubilee of rest in the new heavens and the new earth. The other will be depart from Me to the inescapable verdict of eternal judgment in the lake of fire forever. But Good News, I haven't come for that day yet, I have come for this year of deliverance and grace. What in that day will be inescapable today is escapable in Jesus Christ, the Deliverer, the Redeemer, the One who gives us freedom from our sins. He delivers us from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, who is delivering us from the practice of sin and who will one day even deliver us from the presence of sin. It is this year that He proclaims. Jesus was very intentional.

Why did He quit at the comma? It was because of what He said. He sat down, the people looked at Him and He said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled.” The reason He didn't finish reading the verse is because on that day, the day of vengeance was not to be fulfilled. He stopped where it was to be fulfilled. This day this is fulfilled. The Redeemer has come. The One who will set you free is here. That day is coming but this is now the year of God's grace and favor. What a precious moment we are in.

Today I think I'm speaking to many people who have heard that message of Good News. God has set you at liberty. God binds up your heart. God has set you free. You know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You no longer walk in darkness or in blindness but now I tell you there is a day that's coming. So what is our job until that day comes? That's why we embrace the Great Commission at Briarwood. Until the day of vengeance, we're in the day of proclaiming Good News to all the nations. We are in the day of fulfilling God's call that we take the Gospel to the entire world.

It's so interesting. In Isaiah 61 it says these five things. It says the Messiah will be anointed by the Spirit of God. Did anyone look closely at Luke 3? Jesus was baptized and who came and was poured out from heaven upon Him? It was the Holy Spirit. Then it says the Messiah will be anointed by God, will be affirmed by God. Not only will the Spirit of God be upon Him but God Himself will affirm Him and anoint Him. What did the Father say from heaven as He poured the Spirit of God upon Jesus? “This is My Son in Whom I am well pleased.” Now Jesus is going throughout Galilee preaching the Good News where the year of God's favor has come. But there is a day of wrath that is yet to come. Our mission, until Christ comes, is to warn people of the Day of Judgment. It is inescapable. It is appointed unto men once to die and then the judgment (Hebrews 9:27) but also to say Good News, there is a Deliverer who will deliver you in that Day because He will save you from your sins in this day and bring you to Himself.

That's why we embrace the Great Commission for fifty years. How long will we embrace this? This is our business, the Great Commission. This is what we do. We aren't here to be a social organization. We're not here to give you a little pick-me-up on Sundays when things have gone bad. No, we worship the Lord. We love the Lord's Day. We love the means of grace, preaching, prayer, fellowship, all of the sacraments, the Lord's Supper, prayer with intercession, but the reason we're here is to do what Christ has commanded us to do. Now what is it? Let's look at Matthew 28.

The Great Commission, which is our marching orders, in the year of grace until the day of vengeance our marching orders are very clear. These orders are given to us in

Matthew 28. This is so important that the Great Commission, giving us the fullness of it, is actually found five times in the Bible. It is in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20 and in Acts 1:6-11. It's in five different places. We won't look at all five but as we go to our mission's conference which is the embracing of this Great Commission in a very profound and focused way, we're in the year of jubilee and coming is the Day of God's judgment. In that Day there is no repentance, no salvation so that is our commission until then. So here is the way Jesus gives it in Matthew 28:16-20; **16** *Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.* **17** *And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.* **18** *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* **19** *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

I'm going to start here by giving you our life takeaways and I'm going to give you seven questions that this answers as to why we have been saved. Why have I been saved? I have been saved to do the Great Commission. Why has God kept Briarwood here 50 years? It is to do what it has been doing and to be even more intentional in the next 50 years and that is the Great Commission. Before I answer the seven questions I want to briefly look back at the text. Notice the emphasis on 'make disciples.' Notice the three participles that modify it. See the word 'go' in Matthew 28:19, it really is the word 'going.' As you are going, make disciples. So as your making disciples, next you are to be baptizing them and then in verse 20 you are to be teaching them. Remember that – going, baptizing and teaching.

One other thing I want you to see is that the word 'all' is used four times. By the way, there are two ways to understand the word 'all' in the Bible. One way is it means all kinds of and at times it means every single one of. This is one of those times where all four uses of the Greek word *pantas*, 'all' in the text means every single one. So I would like to look at the text again emphasizing the word 'all.'

Matthew 28:16-20; **16** *Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.* **17** *And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.* **18** *And Jesus came and said to them, "All (every authority- I am King of Kings and Lord of Lords) authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* **19** *Go therefore and make disciples of all (every single nation) nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all (every single thing) that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always (literally all the days), to the end of the age."* Every single day I will not leave you, nor forsake you. I will be with you every single day.

Now let's answer the seven questions. Question #1: Who is given the Great Commission? It says in Matthew 28:16 that the eleven disciples were given the Great Commission. Who are the eleven disciples? They are the embryonic New Testament church. Those eleven disciples will go back to Jerusalem. They will become 12 again and add the most famous disciple of them all, Mathias. (Not all of you know but that's my grandson's name.) Then they will go pray in the upper room and the 12 in the embryonic church will become 120. Then they will step out in their first worship service and the 120 will become 3,000 households, probably 14 to 16,000 people. That's what will happen. Disciples of Christ, followers of Christ, His church are given the Great

Commission. It is not the job of Montgomery. This is not the job of Washington. This is not the job of any government or any social organization or whatever organizations are out there. Jesus did not give this commission to them. He gave it to us. Here is what I have left you here to do. I give you this Great Commission, this enormous privilege, this wonderful opportunity until the day of wrath, the year of grace is here, proclaim Good News to all the nations.

Question #2: What is the Great Commission? The Great Commission is to make disciples. In the text there is one imperative verb. It's not the word 'go.' I was raised in a wonderful denomination called the Christian Missionary Alliance Church and they are committed to missions. Even before I was converted it was bled into my soul sitting in that church. They just love being committed to missions. It's unbelievable what they do for world evangelism. We didn't have one mission's conference a year, we had about four or five every year. Every visiting preacher thought that we had never heard Matthew 28 preached before because every one of them would preach Matthew 28. I have heard an unbelievable amount of sermons on Matthew 28 as an unbeliever and even after I became a believer and then I preached on it time and time again. So it's daunting to come back to something this familiar. One man came in and said, "What's the most important word in these verses? Just in case you don't know, it's the word 'go.' That's the most important word. You take the 'go' out of God and you have 'd.' You take the 'go' out of Gospel and you have 'spel.' You take the 'go' out of good and you have 'od.'" I was wondering how long he would keep that up and I was trying to write it down even as an unbelieving child.

Then I go away to seminary and I study Greek. I find out first of all that it really is 'going' and not 'go.' It's not a verb it's a participle. It modifies the verb, disciples. Along with two other participles so there are three participles that are modifying it and of the three participles it's the weakest. Then that made it the strongest because it doesn't seem like Jesus has to tell us to 'go' He assumes we're going to be going. He just thinks He needs to tell us what to do. He assumes that you're so amazed at grace that you're going to go tell other people about it. So how do you do it? The emphasis falls on making disciples.

So we are not to get decisions or increase church membership but praise the Lord for every new member that is put in. I know you have to make a decision to follow Jesus but we're not to bring people to a decision but to follow Christ – to learn Him, to love Him, to trust Him, to follow Him. The point is that they are not simply missing hell and hitting heaven. The point is that they have been free from their sins and now they have Jesus. So that's where God has called us to in that text. So what's the strategy? How do you do that?

To recap, the first question is who is given the Great Commission? It is the church. The second is what is the Great Commission? It is to make disciples.

Question #3: How do we do the Great Commission? It involves three things – going, baptizing and teaching. Going is intentional evangelism. In fact, Jesus will say in John 20, "As the Father sent Me so send I you." What did Jesus come to do? He came to seek and to save the lost. So as Jesus said the Father sent Me now I am, literally present tense and continuing, sending you. I am sending you to seek and save the lost. So we are to do intentional evangelism so that men and women might have a right relationship with Christ. When they have that right relationship with Christ what do we do? Then we

baptize them. You are intentionally enfolding them into the body of Christ. Men and women alike were being baptized, believers and their household and they added to the church. So now they not only have a right relationship with Christ but they have a right relationship with Christ's church. There is no concept of independent Christians but participants in the body of Christ. They are members one of another.

So you intentionally evangelize which is going and that brings people into a right relationship with Christ. You intentionally enfold them as they are baptized in the Name (singular God), of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit into the body of Christ so they now have a right relationship with Christ's church. Thirdly you are to teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. This is intentionally evangelizing, intentionally enfolding and intentionally equipping them. So they now have a right relationship with God's Word because you can't live the Christian life without knowing God's Word. We are people of the Book. The Christian life is not intuitive.

Recently I was talking to a lady while in the airport and we were talking about a particular issue. She said, "I'll tell you one thing, that's not the God I serve." I said, "Ma'am with all due respect thank you for letting me share this." The God whom you serve really doesn't matter unless it's the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible. People say to me all the time, "Harry why do you keep talking about theology?" That's eternal life. This is eternal life theology that you know God. See a Christian is taught by God from His Word, taught of God from His Word, taught for God from His Word and so here is this need to equip God's people.

Every time you pick up something from Briarwood it says this; for God's glory Briarwood is committed to equipping Christians to worship God and reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ. Why do we have that mission statement? It is because it comes right out of this Great Commission. We didn't come up with that. That's just rewording what God has said. It is that we are going with intentional evangelism to have a right relationship with Christ. We are baptizing, whether it's our church or another church that is faithful to God's Word, where people are being enfolded into the body of Christ to have a right relationship with Christ's church. Then we are equipping them by intentionally teaching them from God's Word so that they can have a right relationship with God's Word. That's the three-fold strategy and everything at Briarwood has to be committed to that mission.

Question #4: How far do we go to accomplish this Great Commission? We go to every single nation, from Birmingham to the South, to North America, to the world. We go to **all** the nations, everywhere.

Question #5: How long are we to embrace the Great Commission? I have two answers. One is to the end of the age, to the Day of Judgment. When that Day comes we're through with the Great Commission. There is another way to see it. It's the way Jesus said it in Luke 24. He said, "I'll tell you when the end of the age has come. It's when this Gospel has been preached to all the nations." So until that Day, when all of His people have been gathered from all of the nations, we embrace the Great Commission. We're not about drinking coffee, holding hands and singing Kumbaya. We can do all that but that's not why we're here. We are here to fulfill the Great Commission. I love to sit around with men and women who have responsibilities in their business because they'll say, "How's business?" This is our business. We're an army. This is our mission.

How long are we on this mission? It is until all nations have heard the Gospel and all of God's people have been brought to Christ and until the end comes this is what we do.

Question #6: How in the world can we accomplish the Great Commission, this evangelism, this enfolding, this caring for God's people, loving people when they are wounded, helping people, challenging people, encouraging people, equipping people, teaching people? How long do we embrace this Great Commission? We embrace it until the end of the age. How in the world can we accomplish something like this? Look at us. Can you imagine what these disciples must have felt when Jesus said, "Go preach the Gospel to every single nation"? They probably just looked at each other and they are minus one now because there were only eleven there when He said that. Peter just how much money did you make in that fishing business? Matthew did you keep any of that money that you stole from people? We may need it. Can you imagine them looking around at each other? How in the world can we reach the world with the Gospel? Jesus said, "I've already told you that. I am with you to the end of the age."

Some of you that are thinking ahead of me know that they leave this mountain at the Sea of Galilee and go back to Jerusalem and Jesus ascends to heaven, so how can He be with them? It is by the Holy Spirit. By the power of the Holy Spirit I will be with you and that's why He will say "Go back to that upper room and pray until I send the Holy Spirit upon you. It is only by My strength and My power, not by your might that you will do this." God never commands us to do what He will not resource us to do. He says, "I will give you the Holy Spirit." He will go before you to open eyes and ears. He will conduct you, teach you and through you He will teach others. He will give you what to say and when you need to say it but it is that Holy Spirit who will empower you to accomplish this ministry of reaching the world through out the world.

Question #7: Harry, how when we know that mission impossible has become mission accomplished? This thing looks impossible. Okay I have the Holy Spirit so how will we know when it's been accomplished? It's when you hit the homerun. What's a homerun for Briarwood? First base is going which is intentional evangelism so that people can have a right relationship to Christ. Second base is intentionally enfolding people into the body of Christ. They were baptized and added into the body of Christ. We enfold so that people can see, know and feel the love of the brethren in Jesus Christ. So when they are hurt they are helped. When they've wandered we go after them. When they need shepherding, encouraging or counseling that they get it. Third base is intentionally equipping God's people by teaching them all that He's commanded. I know you have to start with primary doctrine and work to secondary doctrine but all of God's Word is important. So we will teach all that He has commanded. But we still haven't scored. There have been a lot of games lost with bases loaded. When do we get home?

You know I have to stay with my "e's" here right? We have first base, evangelism. Second base is enfolding. Third base is equipping and home is exaltation. These disciples whom Jesus had gone and gotten had enfolded and equipped when they saw Him and in Matthew 28:17 it says, "*And when they saw him they **worshiped** him...*" This is why worship is so upon my heart, worship that is acceptable to God. I believe worship is the foundation and the fulfillment of the Great Commission. When did they give the Great Commission? It was when they were worshipping Him. What happens when people get discipled? They worship Him. They know that they have been saved for the glory of His grace. I've been saved to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. That's



why His hand of salvation has been put upon me. That's why I believe assembled worship is so important because when we get together for worship it ought to set the pace for when we scatter to worship, evangelize, enfold and equip God's people.

Notice how it says "they worshiped Him..." They didn't worship, worship. They didn't say "look here's Jesus, let's worship so we can feel good." I'm sure they were blessed but that's not why they worshiped. They worshiped Him. He was the object of worship. He was the subject of worship. He was their worship. They didn't worship unbelievers around them in seeker centered worship. They didn't worship themselves. It wasn't believers centered worship. It was God centered worship. That's when you have hit the homerun. When have we hit the homerun? It's when we reach the nations with the Gospel and the praise of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea. That's the testimony of the Great Commission fulfilled. It's adoration to the One true and living God who alone is worthy of our worship.

Earlier I recommended you read the biography of John Paton. John Paton was a wonder of wonders, a Scottish Presbyterian minister who was convinced and convicted that he was called to the South Pacific. He got word of a place called the New Hebrides and he had heard of the two first missionaries that had been sent there. They landed and from the ship the people watched these two preachers land in the New Hebrides and within 30 minutes they had been killed and eaten by the cannibals. The ship returned. When that message got to John Paton he said, "The New Hebrides has been baptized with the blood of the martyrs. It now belongs to Christ and I'm going to claim it." I know you're probably going to get the book but I'd like to read this one part from the book.

"Among many who sought to deter me from going to the New Hebrides was one dear old Christian gentleman whose crowning argument would always end with this; 'Oh Mr. Paton if you go you will be eaten by cannibals.' So finally I replied to him, 'Mr. Dixon you are advanced in years and your own prospect is very soon to be laid in a grave. There you will be eaten by worms. I confess to you if I can but live and die and serve and honor the Lord Jesus there it doesn't make any difference to me whether cannibals or worms eat me. It makes no difference for in the Great Day my resurrection body will arise just as fair as yours in the likeness of my Redeemer.'

So he went and in the first year his wife and his son died. He put their grave next to his house and he covered it over with marble. He would literally sit upon it and around it and one of the reasons why was so that they wouldn't come and unearth it and possibly devour them. And for 50 years he preached the Gospel until he was 83. He said one of the greatest moments was when he gathered those first disciples who had come to Christ that he had disciplined through evangelism, enfold and equipping them and then they gathered for worship. He said he would never forget the day that he put in their hands the bread and the cup. These who had eaten the flesh of their enemies and drank the blood of those whom they conquered had now been conquered by grace and ate and drank of Christ. O what glory! Now the New Hebrides where he served is called the Newta. Ninety one percent claim Christ as Savior. From cannibalism to conquered by grace to more than conquerors by the Lord Jesus.

That's what my nation needs. That's what my city needs. That's what this world needs. That's what God has called us to do – to equip Christians to go, to worship God and reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ. That's our mission. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the privilege to come to this moment where Jesus stopped at the comma and the Day of wrath has not yet come. The day of redemption and the Year of Jubilee are proclaimed. Father, thank You for saving us. If you have not yet come to Christ and you say, "Pastor I want to go but I haven't first come" then come now. Come to Jesus for today in the Year of Jubilee is the day of your salvation. Say this prayer, "Jesus receive me. I repent of my sins. I put my trust in You alone this day." Father, I thank You for this company of believers that have for 50 years embraced this commission. O God, we rejoice in it. Now O God, send us forth afresh and anew knowing that we are to intentionally go, intentionally evangelize, enfold and equip the people of God who love, trust, follow, and obey Jesus Christ, until the praise of our God would go to the rising and the setting of the sun. Thank You that in the midst of all of this You will send us, You will be with us and You will receive all of the glory and that is our joy, in Jesus' Name, Amen.